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1. Explain how the project fills a gap that cannot be provided through other means and how a significant gap will exist in the local service area if the project does not receive Homeless Crisis Response Program funding.

Providers throughout the five counties in Region 5 work collaboratively to identify appropriate placement for those seeking emergency shelter. We explore housing options aligned with the needs of impacted individuals and families at the time a housing crisis arises. Whenever possible, it is in the interest of those served—as well as the overall continuum of care—to avert or reduce shelter stays. Such an approach provides a faster return to normalcy for those experiencing a short-term crisis and ensures that beds are available for those most in need. Rapid re-housing funds can avert or shorten shelter stays for those households who are able to demonstrate the capacity to achieve stability within a 3-6 month period. This funding provides an important mechanism to expedite permanent housing placement. Other housing options available in the community may require several additional weeks to complete even though expedited procedures have been put in place.

Unfortunately, there are many in our communities who lack income and for whom a greater challenge exists in the quest for stability. Region 5 is committed to reducing barriers for this population and is exploring ways to make all resources, including rapid rehousing funds, more accessible. Partners are exploring ways to make processes more accessible and flexible to accommodate individual needs as well as pursuing innovative approaches to community engagement of landlords to increase the pool of housing available to those we serve.

In the meantime, however, subsidized housing, the best option for homeless persons with extremely low incomes, often has waiting lists that result in delays far longer than the maximum length of a shelter stay. Homelessness prevention funds allow providers in Region 5 to address that gap and ensure housing stability is maintained. With the possibility of a slight increase in HCRP funding for the next grant period, Region 5 providers anticipate increasing the number served and maintaining our primary focus on rapid rehousing.

### Ashtabula County

New Hope, a program of the **Ashtabula Community Housing Development Organization**, received 100 housing assistance inquiries of which 55 completed applications, 21 completed in-person assessments, and 34 qualified but we were unable to serve them in the period from January to the end of April 2017. As of June 2017, the agency has only enough funding to assist approximately 2 more households for this program year. Once those households are enrolled, we will no longer take applications.

New Hope is designed as a cross between Transitional Housing and Short-term Rapid Rehousing in that it provides a slightly longer timeframe for households to get back on their feet and provides support to move them forward. Since New Hope seeks to assist those with more barriers to become self-sufficient and stabilize their housing situation, finding a housing option more suited for success is important. This shows need for the emergency shelter and short-term rapid re-housing while seeking safe, affordable permanent housing.

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Over the past two year grant period, New Hope has had much better outcomes in assisting participants to obtain income/employment.

Ashtabula County has one homeless shelter with 13 beds and a transitional housing unit, Beatitude House – House of Blessing. When these units are full, there are few other options for homeless individuals; thus the need for referring to other entities within the region or even outside of the region. However, transportation becomes a significant barrier as there is limited bus transportation available in and out of the County.

In an effort to reduce the amount of time in shelters, many social service agencies of the County (including homeless prevention/rapid re-housing providers, community mental health providers, Job and Family Services, Metropolitan Housing Authority) meet monthly, as a group, with individuals & families currently or previously residing in a shelter. This is a triage effort to determine a plan of action to quickly re-house and stabilize homeless residents.

**Catholic Charities of Ashtabula County** continues to be an entry point for homeless individuals and families visiting the agency. When the only homeless shelter is full, it is difficult to find immediate housing for the homeless. Even if they are eligible for rapid re-housing funding, affordable housing must first be secured. According to the *2017 Ohio Housing Needs Assessment: Renter Affordability*, fewer than 14 out of 100 units are adequate and affordable for an extremely low-income household in Ashtabula County. According to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, over 54% of households in Ashtabula County pay more than 30% of their income in gross rent, and the poverty rate in the County is 18.6%.

In an effort to be more available at clients' time of need, Catholic Charities has gone to a walk-in process for those requesting help with basic needs. The Agency meets with approximately 130 households per month. While that number includes all basic needs, a significant amount has indicated some type of housing crisis. Such a high volume of clients means that both the HCRP funds and other agency funding are often exhausted prior to the end of the contracts.

Catholic Charities utilizes the HCRP funds to try to quickly house homeless individuals, and to maintain housing for those in eminent danger of losing housing, along with case management to ensure stabilization. From other funding sources, Catholic Charities is also able to provide for limited motel stays, transportation, food, clothing and household items, representative payeeship, financial literacy education, as well as information and referrals to other appropriate services.

Individuals who are moving from homelessness to housing often experience difficulty in obtaining utilities in their name due to delinquent accounts from the past. In permitting arrearages to be paid, HCRP fills a critical need that no other funding source provides.

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### Geauga County

Within Geauga County, there are limited options available for homeless individuals as the county does not currently have a homeless shelter. In addition, only one domestic violence shelter exists to meet the needs of homeless individuals.

Safe and affordable housing is limited in Geauga County. Once individuals are identified as homeless in Geauga County, there are significant barriers to obtaining housing. Within the county, the median gross rent was \$818 in 2016, which was 26.2% of the household income (Ohio Development Services Agency, Ohio County Profiles 2016). This causes a significant shortage of affordable housing options within the county for low-income homeless persons.

Specifically for domestic violence, there were 146 unmet requests for services in the Domestic Violence Counts Ohio Summary in 2015, of which 66% were for housing (National Network to End Domestic Violence). This survey also stated that on that same day, 38% of services included support/advocacy related to housing/landlord and 72% were for emergency shelter.

**WomenSafe, Inc.**, the only shelter in Geauga County, fills these gaps by providing emergency shelter services for survivors of domestic violence. Survivors are able to reside at the emergency shelter until affordable housing can be located. In May 2017, there were 11 adults and 8 children listed on the point in time survey as homeless in WomenSafe's emergency shelter.

It is anticipated that the funding will reduce the length of stay in the domestic violence shelter by allowing persons served to obtain stable housing faster since low-income clients will be able to access rental assistance to immediately move into their new housing rather than remaining in emergency shelter while they attempt to obtain these funds. With the support of aftercare and donation services, the number of repeat incidences of persons seeking shelter due to domestic violence and becoming homeless once again will be reduced as they will have employees responsible for assisting them while they are in their new homes.

Without Homeless Crisis Response Program funding, individuals residing in the domestic violence emergency shelter would be forced to remain in shelter for longer periods of time. This funding provides not only rental assistance, but staffing positions to allow for the gathering of appropriate donations to furnish new housing and ongoing case management services. These donations are vital as without them, survivors would have to spend their low-income to purchase these necessities for their home. Case management includes reducing additional barriers that may lead one to not maintain safe, independent housing. This includes securing needed donations to assist survivors once they obtain a new home and thereafter. These donations may include: food, clothing, toiletries, cleaning supplies, furniture, and other necessary items specific to the client.

Families who have experienced trauma tend to have significant barriers to housing. As a result, survivors are more likely to return to their abusers due to financial issues, lack of

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resources, and not having available support. WomenSafe fills this gap by providing employees to assist survivors of domestic violence with financial needs, stabilize the families in their new homes, and assist individuals in developing a support system that allows for long-term housing stability and self-sufficiency of families in their new homes.

### Lake County

Lake County's Community Action Agency, **Lifeline, Inc.**, manages a number of programs designed to help its clients achieve housing stability and eliminate barriers to self-sufficiency. In Lake County housing options are very limited for those individuals and families whose income falls below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Based on 2009-2013 federal data, our county has 980 rental units that would be considered affordable for households below 30% of AMI. Total households in the extremely low income category number 7,405. "Housing problem" data from the American Community Survey identifies 4,225 renter households in this income category that are looking to rent these units, a nearly 5:1 ratio. Additionally, Lake County's fair market rents are the highest of the five counties included in BOSCO Region 5. Lifeline, Inc. also operates the local 2-1-1 hotline, which is Lake County's central/coordinated intake site for homeless programs and assessment.

Based on this data we know that the housing situation in Lake County is very difficult for our lowest income residents. For those households exiting our emergency shelters, the prospects would be very dim without the financial assistance Lifeline, Inc. is able to provide as a result of HCRP funds. Rapid rehousing funds are used to provide security deposit and utility deposit/arrears assistance, rental assistance and case management services to our literally homeless population. Although we are only able to provide a few months of assistance, that money helps tremendously to stabilize our neediest households. Without this funding, the homeless would need to stay significantly longer in the shelters. In 2016, Lifeline housed 32 households (56 individuals) using HCRP funds. All of these individuals were shelter guests exiting either Project Hope for the Homeless (an emergency shelter) or Forbes House (a domestic violence shelter), or were referred by Extended Housing's Homeless Outreach staff.

Additionally, for those clients needing more support than rapid rehousing can provide, having the Lifeline Transitional Housing program – while very small with resources for only 5 households (7 individuals) – fills a very critical niche for our most seriously challenged homeless households. Being able to provide them with a few additional months of financial and case management support can make the difference between a household becoming self-sufficient and an unfortunate return to homelessness.

### Portage County

**Family & Community Services, Inc. (FCS)** is unique in that various homeless and housing programs fall within the agency's service array. This includes emergency shelter (including a domestic violence shelter), emergency hotel vouchers for when shelter is full, homeless prevention assistance, rapid re-housing assistance, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing. Target populations served include victims of domestic violence,

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veterans, persons with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues, youth aging out of foster care, families with children, and single females and males.

All key FCS housing staff members (including the agency's HMIS administrator) attend monthly internal Housing Team meetings, which also include representatives from Coleman Professional Services' residential program. This meeting provides a forum to explore ways the programs can work effectively to coordinate services and reduce the length of time a household is homeless. HCRP funding represents a critical resource in the community that can be brought to bear to support this goal.

From January through June 2016, HCRP funds assisted 32 households (18 families and 14 single adults). Eight of these households were moved directly from the agency's shelters to permanent housing. As service support is strengthened, homeless and doubled-up households can be diverted from shelter entry through service coordination or by establishing housing through rapid re-housing or prevention funds. For literally homeless households, rapid re-housing funds are essential to shortening stays for those residing in shelters and to provide overall stability for the households by providing temporary financial assistance and case management. HCRP funding provides an important mechanism to expedite permanent housing placement and fills a critical gap in the county's housing services. Other housing options for literally homeless households often require several additional weeks to gain access.

**Coleman Professional Services** assists with locating stable housing through HCRP funds, typically within the time frame given by shelters. On average, if a person is homeless but receiving Social Security, their income is around \$490 per month. The median rent for a one bedroom unit in Portage County can cost \$480-\$550 plus utilities. As of June 2016, Coleman has a waiting list that results in individual/family wait times of six months to one year. Initially, clients participate in a meeting to assess for Coleman Housing and determine the appropriate wait list. While they wait for possible options through Coleman, other (temporary) options are explored so that clients are not homeless.

During this time of locating stable housing, signing a lease and reporting to Social Security of rental payments being made, in hopes of raising their income, people are referred to vocational services and, where appropriate, linked with a case manager to assist connecting people to benefits at Department of Job and Family Services and Portage Metropolitan Housing Authority. People are encouraged to look for employment, to increase their income, to ensure self sufficiency once exiting the program and maintaining their current residence within the community.

### Trumbull County

Without the HCRP program in Trumbull County, individuals and families would be at greater risk of becoming homeless and those who are homeless would be at greater risk of becoming chronically homeless.

**Humility of Mary Housing/Emmanuel Community Care Center (HMH/ECCC)** provides homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing services to homeless persons and those in

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imminent risk of homelessness in Trumbull County. Individuals and families who are homeless, especially those who are chronically homeless are given priority scheduling when they present for services. Case managers screen individuals to determine homelessness and schedule persons appropriately. Case managers also meet with clients at Christy House, the local emergency shelter and Someplace Safe, the domestic violence shelter to identify those in need of rapid re-housing. In addition, in 2018 case managers will work with PATH workers and other community agencies to rapidly identify homeless who may be unwilling or unable to access shelters and meet with them in the community where they are staying and work to rapidly assist them in finding appropriate housing.

In 2016 the rapid re-housing program assisted 17 individuals in the shelter to find housing. In addition, and 11 people who were living in places not mean for human habitation were placed in permanent housing. There would be no other assistance available for these individuals if HCRP funding was not available. In addition, in 2016 the HCRP homelessness prevention program assisted 78 individuals maintain housing in Trumbull County, including 38 children who were at imminent risk of homelessness. In an effort to reach the goal of 75% rapid re-housing and 25% homelessness prevention, HMH/ECCC continues to refocus homelessness prevention efforts to target individuals and families most likely to become homeless such as those who are doubled up or have a court ordered eviction and have no alternative place to stay.

According to the American Community Survey (2009-2013), approximately 60% of households in Trumbull County below 30% area median income are severely rent burdened. These families spend more than 50% of their income on rent. . Any small family emergency can place them at risk of becoming homeless. Rental units in Trumbull County have also increased in cost and it is challenging at times to find housing that falls within the Fair Market Rent criteria. . While the unemployment rate has decline to 5.0% in April, 2017, Trumbull County has the 6<sup>th</sup> highest unemployment rate in the state at 6.3%. The opium crisis in Trumbull County also contributes to unstable housing and homelessness and presents challenges to rapidly re-housing homeless individuals.

As the contract agency for **Trumbull County Mental Health and Recovery Board**, Coleman Professional Services is one of three agencies within Trumbull County that identify the scope of problems vulnerable youth in transition face and is the only agency that provides direct housing services to transition aged youth (aged 18-26 years old) through the HCRP grant. Although there are additional housing systems in place through emergency shelters, public housing, Section 8, and shelter plus care vouchers; these options do not provide a full range of services to the transition aged youth population. The transition aged youth have a continuously changing, unstable housing experience and some face difficulties from the moment they become 18 years old.

The Trumbull County emergency shelters continue to have limited space and at times those shelters are not equipped to suit the needs of the transition aged youth population. This at times leads to transition aged youth leaving the shelters and living in abandoned homes or in places not meant for human habitation. Many of these vulnerable youth have experienced physical, emotional, mental and/or sexual trauma since a very young age and

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may be subject to further trauma while living on the streets. The HCRP grant allows Coleman to provide the required level of care to the homeless transition aged youth to ensure that housing as well as recovery is at the forefront of their lives.

2. Describe how the applicant participates in the planning work of their Homeless Planning Region. The description must include discussion of the applicant's participation in Homeless Planning Region committees/workgroups, if any. This should include identification of the level of involvement of the applicant and the role they play within each committee/workgroup identified. (INCLUDE COPY OF MINUTES DEMONSTRATING PARTICIPATION)<sup>1</sup>

Region 5 planning consists of ensuring that each county in the region has timely information regarding the coordination and implementation of homeless services and programs including HCRP. Our goal is to support our member organizations in providing effective, appropriate services to our region's homeless and at-risk populations. The regional providers meet semi-annually to help ensure communication and service coordination. Additionally the Executive Committee meets several times a year and also participates in conference calls as needed. A website<sup>2</sup> has been developed to keep housing providers informed of the region's activities.

### HIC/PIT Committee

The purpose of this committee is to develop a coordinated regional process to collect homeless data for persons living on the street or other places unfit for habitation, in emergency shelters, or in transitional housing. This data will be collected over a 24-hour period. Our committee will agree on data collection tools and methods, and will identify a process to report this information collectively to COHHIO. In addition, this committee will determine the best method for identifying and updating the housing programs throughout our region and will develop a procedure to report this information to COHHIO when requested.

### HMIS Committee

Chaired by Jenn Matlack, Family & Community Services, the goals of the Region 5 HMIS Committee are to:

- Help HMIS users within Region 5 expand their knowledge and understanding of the Service Point 5 system
- Develop a process to monitor HMIS results and key metrics for homelessness prevention, emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing programs within the region
- Work with housing providers within Region 5 to put in place processes they can use to manage their HMIS data to ensure accurate reports/results

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting minutes can be found immediately after the Homeless Planning Region Form

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ohioboscocregion5.org/meeting-results>

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Region 5 partners are active participants in the regional collaborative at full meetings and on subcommittees as well as leading County level housing councils. Some examples of this commitment and involvement include:

In Lake County, Carrie Dotson, Executive Director at Lifeline, Inc., chairs the local Continuum of Care Committee and facilitates bi-monthly meetings while providing meeting space. She shares data at various levels of geography, studies and HUD guidance pertinent to the particular demographic to other regional partners, as well as helps to coordinate local projects, including the PIT, Code Blue and other projects involving homelessness. Carrie also began representing Lake County at the Region 5 level as a member of the Region 5 Executive Team in early 2017. She has been attending various Region 5 trainings and planning meetings regularly since 2014.

In Trumbull County, representatives from Christy House (homeless shelter), Trumbull Metropolitan Housing, Beatitude House, Trumbull County Mental Health and Recovery Board, YWCA Warren (PSH), Catholic Charities and HMM/ECCC regularly attend the regional meetings. The representatives from these organizations are active participants in the Trumbull County Housing Collaborative which meets to address and coordinate the needs of the homeless in Trumbull County. All of these representatives participate in the Point in Time Count and work together to appropriately house homeless people in the community. Sister Jean Orsuto, one of the members of the Region 5 Executive Committee is currently the chairperson of the Trumbull County Housing Collaborative.

In Portage County, our agencies help lead the Portage County Housing Services Council. Jenn Matlack, Family & Community Services, is in her second term as President and Carol McCullough, Coleman Professional Services, is in her second term as Secretary. Together they have led strategic planning sessions for the County that have resulted in increased membership and participation, relationship development with the landlord community, and improved communication and information distribution.